THE CASE Of the Suffering People of GOD, Truly Stated:

And their Innocencie vindicated from the falſe Aſperſions and Pretences (under which the Perſecuting Spirit ſeeks to cover it ſelf, to make the Nation believe its Proceedings againſt them are juſt) that it may be unvailed, and appear as it is in its ſelf, and the Cauſe for which Gods People ſuffer made appear, according to the nature of it.

Wherein alſo

The Perſecutors in ENGLAND are warned, before the Day of the Lord overtake them, as a deſtruction from him.

LONDON:

Printed in the Year 1664.

A S B

Of the Salvation

People of G O D,

Truly Stated:

Printed in the Year 1654.

The Case of the Suffering People of God, truly Stated.

OH! what hardness of Heart, searedness of Conscience, and benumedness is come upon them that have set themselves in a Spirit of Enmity, against such as fear God, and keep their Consciences void of offence towards God and man? and how is the Righteous sought to be made a prey upon, and to be destroyed by such as have set themselves in a Persecuting Spirit, to Persecute, oppress and injure the Righteous? Surely this hardness of heart, and persecuting innocent men for their Consciences (that is got up among the men in this Generation, who profess Christianity) doth fore-run heavy and severe judgements from the Righteous God, upon all them whose hearts are filled with cruelty and malice against tender Consciences, whom nothing will satisfie, but even the rooting out of the Righteous, and of the Truth it self, if it were possible; and the defacing all appearance of Sobriety, Faithfulness and Sincerity, where it appears under a differing Form or Way from that which the persecuting Spirit would impose and confine all to; The Righteous God who beholds and weighs the Actions of men, who will judge righteously and without respect of persons (be they never so high) takes notice of these injuries, and wrongs, and oppressions that his own tender Seed suffers under. And he that hears the sighings of his Prisoners, will call all to judgement that are partakers of this great iniquity, of persecuting and oppressing his People for matters of Conscience and Worship; And though this Spirit that thus highly appears against the Righteous, be subtil and crafty in its instruments, in going about to ensnare and persecute men, and to spie out occasions against such as appear against its Wayes and Oppressions, yea if it be but such as are for a general good, in a civil way, as among men, that have an inspection into the indirect wayes, and corrupt proceedings of that Spirit of Persecution, it will endeavour the stopping their mouths, and seek their overthrow; And yet for all its subtilty, and its colours and pretences, it cannot hide it self nor them that are in it, neither un-

der the profession of Christianity, Justice, or Legal proceedings; for all whose eyes are open, and who retain but a common understanding without prejudice; see what the Persecutors work tends to, as to endeavour the rooting out of the *Good*, and the giving Life and Liberty to the bad and prophane; for why else are we persecuted and cast into Prisons, and many of us thronged up together in Holes and nasty Places, for peaceably meeting together in the Service and Worship of the Living God, to wait upon him, or to edifie one another in that Faith and Love received in Christ, as the Saints and true Christians have done, *when Drunkards, Swearers, Ballad-singers in the streets, Stage-players, Puppet-players, Fidlers, Bear-baiting*, and such like have their liberty (yea and some of them Licences too) to uphold their *prophane Meetings* and Practices; do not all rational and sober men take notice of these things? And do you (who have set your selves to persecute us) think that the God of Heaven and Earth will not be avenged on such a people, and severely judge for such doings? Oh! consider these things, and let not presumption and pride of heart so far over-whelm you, as either to say within your selves there is no God, or that you shall not be called to an account for your proceedings.

For the injury or wrong that we (the Lord's People, called *Quakers*) suffer, is a two-fold injury. First, By persecuting and imprisoning, and going about to exile or banish us for our Consciences, and so debarring many of us of the benefit of the fresh Air, and keeping many in nasty Holes, which tends to destroy the outward man, which oppression and suffering cries in the ears of the Lord, and is so far from Christianity, that it is below humanity it self, and natural affection, tenderness or respect to the Creation it self. And secondly, we suffer injury from our Persecutors, by their mis-representing us as Injurious and Criminal, so to bring us under that, called the Civil or Temporal Law, as Offenders, (which does not at all reach our Case) and not as those that suffer upon a conscientious account, or for a matter of tender Conscience, that the Persecuting Spirit may (under such false glosses and deceits, and wronging the Innocent and their Cause) colour over its proceedings as Legal and Just, the injustice whereof who is it cannot see? For what evil, Sedition or injury against any mans person have our Meetings produced, let our Neighbours

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and the whole Nation bear witness, and the Just Witness of God in men judge, and Conscience speak, or any who have beheld our deportment and behaviour? have we not been all along a suffering people, and exposed to great sufferings since we were a people, for matters of Religion and Conscience? wherein we must give account unto God, and answer his Will and not mans: and have we not borne our Suffering patiently without resistance? Hath not long experience (and that under the several Governments or Powers since we were a People) shewed that our deportment hath been peaceable and harmless in the exercise of our Consciences? so as we have still innocency for our Plea in the sight of our Enemies, and so have not forfeited our interest in that Liberty so often promised to tender Consciences, which is to be left free to God to Rule, and Order, and not for man to limit to his will or lord over.

And those that persecute tender Consciences, or Gods People, (who are harmless and innocent) break our peaceable Meetings by rude Souldiers, Armed men, or otherwise, and oppress and imprison us, and go about to banish us, under notion of being Seditious Sectaries, disloyal Persons, and our Meetings, as being Seditious Conventicles, Tumultuous Assemblies, tending to Rebellion and Insurrection; and accuse us for meeting under colour or pretence of Religious exercise, (as if the contrary were intended) and so to sentence us to suffer for unlawful Assemblies, when no unlawful Act can be proved against us, that we have committed, or ever met about. Now whilst upon these accusations, and in this wise branding us, Reason, Justice and Legality is pretended in their proceedings against us; This is but a Cloak, and a Cover, and a false gloss, whilst no such criminal matters can be proved against us, or any of the People of God, who are peaceable and innocent, and desire the good of all men in what we do; and our Case is a Spiritual Matter, relating to Conscience, and the Worship of God, which is out of the reach of any Temporal or Civil Law, which was made, or added, because of outward Transgressions; so as our Cause is out of your sight, and beyond your Sphear, who persecute us in this wise, and not to be judged of by such whose judgement is but fallible, whether they profess themselves to be Spiritual or Temporal Judges; for the Spirit of God which is infallible, in which we serve and worship

Him,

him, is our Guide and Leader, and thereby we know him to be our Lord and Law-giver, as he is to his Church.

And our being perfecuted as being obstinate or wilful, and Contemners of Authority, for not swearing, as some of us have been, when we have been indicted for refusing the Oath of Allegiance, (which is said to be a promissory Oath) as wilfully & obstinately refusing it, and in contempt, *&c.* as also for refusing those called Judicial Oaths, we are liable to be exposed to Banishment; (as being represented not to refuse them out of conscientiousness, but obstinacy, and the like) which is an apparent wrong done to us, and our case herein is misrepresented, and such things have been laid as snares, on purpose to make us suffer; for the Lord knows our hearts and consciences in this matter, that it is not out of obstinacy, nor wilfulness, nor contempt, that we have refused to swear, but singly for Conscience-sake to Christ, and in obedience to him, (see *Mat.* 5. 33, 34. *James* 5. 12.) as those that know the Love of God, which ends the strife that was the occasion of Oaths, and must hold forth a Testimony of that Love both in Word, in Doctrine and Example.

And albeit we have been rendered as Criminal Offenders in these Cases of Conscience, and as Contemners of Authority, and seditious, *&c.* in our meeting together (which is in the Worship of God) and Decrees or Laws have been intended against us thereupon; it hath been seldom (in many places) that the Prosecutors of them (or our Persecutors) would keep to their own Law, when it was brought forth, as to suffer a fair tryal according to the letter or words of it; but sometimes when some of us have been taken in a Meeting for matter of Worship, some have had also the Oath of Allegiance tendered them; and that the Persecutors might be sure to make them suffer as much as they could under colour of legality, they have committed them to Prison, both for meeting and refusing to swear, and afterwards sentenced some thereupon to a *Premunire*: And after that some have been taken and imprisoned for matters of Worship, as supposed Transgressors of an Act of Parliament, when they have been brought to Sessions they might not be tried upon the Law upon which they were first taken and imprisoned, but have been indicted at common Law (as was pretended against them) for meeting to the terrour of the people, by force and arms, *&c.* and thereupon sentenced,

ced, and their suffering encreased, when all that could be proved against them, was, That they were at a Meeting which was peaceable, (where it may be some were preaching the Truth, or praying, or all sitting together in silence;) And thus we have been wronged, and falsely rendered, as criminal, and our Case misrepresented: And all this is, that these men may oppress us as much as they can, and that under the shew of Reason and Justice; that they may be taken as those that are just in their proceedings, when there is no Reason nor Truth in the ground thereof, *but Justice turned backward amongst them, and Equity cannot enter.*

And now many of the innocent Servants of the Lord suffer imprisonment, some being committed for three months, and some for a few days, which is all in enmity against them, with an intent, in those that deal so by them, to suppress them, or to rid the Nation of them the sooner: and this is done against them for meeting together in the Worship of God, under pretence against them, that their Meetings are seditious Conventicles, or tumultuous or unlawful Assemblies, or under colour or pretence of Religious Exercise not allowed by the Liturgy or Practice of the Church of *England*, &c. when as all that could be proved or evidenced against us, was, That we were in a Meeting, or met in such a place (which was in a peaceable manner, & neither seditious nor tumultuous) where it may be some might be preaching Righteousness and Truth, or praying to the Lord by his Spirit, or in some place sitting in silence, waiting upon the Lord, where no colour nor pretence at all of Religious Exercise or Worship could be proved, for what as was, must be really in our hearts to the Lord God in that Case, without any colour or pretence as to their view or capacities who have taken us, or witnessed against any of us; but the bare proof that we were at a Meeting (as mentioned) serves them to make us suffer upon, they not regarding whether the Religious Exercise or Worship which we are in, be according to the Scriptures of Truth, or the practice of the primitive Christians and Saints, who met in Houses, Fields, and the like, and worshipped God in the *Spirit and Truth*, and therein waited, preathed and prayed, as the Spirit taught them, and gave them utterance, and as they had received the gift, &c. which we own, and many of us suffer for, and which our Persecutors will not in words seem to deny, when it is put to them, nor say that their Liturgy, or publick *Service* or *Prayer*

does not allow of that Worship or Religious Exercise which is according to the Scriptures, which stands in the Spirit and in the Truth; for they would be taken as those that own the Scriptures for their Rule, and their Liturgy not to disown the Scriptures, and yet persecute and oppress us for practising according to what is written in the Scriptures, in point of Worship, as therein we are led by the Spirit of Truth. For though the Devices, Ceremonies and Traditions of men in matter of Worship, and formal praying and confessions, &c. we cannot be tied unto, lest we should quench or limit the Spirit of prayer and supplication, which God hath poured upon us, (which to do, were against God and his Worship, and so Antichristian) yet the Liturgy, as it allows of the Scriptures both to be read and practised, it must consequently allow of what the Scriptures allow of; and though we meet not at those places called Churches, (which were the *Popes* Mass-houses) yet the Religious Exercise and Worship we are in, is according to the Scriptures of Truth, and therefore should not be disallowed of by the Liturgy, nor any Law made by man whatsoever, whether it be called Civil or Ecclesiastical: for the Law of God (in which our eternal felicity is concerned) hath no man power to dispence withal, nor ought any Law to oppose it.

And though it may be objected, *That we do not worship or pray in the express form of the Liturgy*; It does not follow that what we do, as not allowed of by it, is for diversities of forms, or varieties of things, do not make such a disallowance between them, for where the disallowance is, there must be a prohibition; but neither the Liturgy, nor those that conform to it, will seem to disallow or prohibit the reading or practising what is written in the Scriptures of Truth: and therefore how unreasonable a thing is it that they should go about to destroy their fellow-Creatures (who are both free-born Englishmen, and Christians in life) for worshipping God according to the Scriptures, according to which we can prove our practice, if so much Reason and Equity might be admitted of, as that the case might be fairly discussed between us and our Adversaries.

And if the practice and Canons of the Church of *England* should be objected against us, *&c.* Wherein they are alledged or brought against what we practise according to the Scriptures of Truth, (which the Liturgy in many places doth both allow of, and refer

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to) they are insignificant, and so far contradictory to the Liturgy: For if it saith, *The Scriptures are written for our learning*, and that *the worship of God is perfect freedom*, and that *his Church is governed and sanctified by his Spirit*, and that *men ought to perform duty to God at all times and in all places*; and we for worshipping God in the Spirit, and freedom of it, be persecuted and oppressed under pretence of not conforming to the Practice or Canons of the Church; how will these hang together? and what confusion is it, that men should pretend to a Divine Service, and their Practice and Proceedings contradict it? or be contrary to much of the matter contained in their Divine Service, especially in the *Collects*, wherein many Scriptures pertinent to our Case, are made use of?

And moreover, How many Innocent Men in this Nation have suffered both from the Temporal Courts, and Spiritual Courts (so called) for their obeying God in his Way and Spiritual Worship? As, some have had their Goods taken, and others imprisoned for meeting together in the Worship of God apart from those places called Churches, (knowing that God is not to be limited to a place) and at the same time when they have suffered upon that account, (to loss of Goods and Imprisonment) they have been proceeded against in the Spiritual Courts, (so called;) and so double snares laid upon them to encrease their suffering: Is this Christian-like? or the way to establish a Church or Religion? No, no; It's the way to set all Sober and Moderate Men further off, and the more to make them believe that that Building or House is upon no good Foundation, that must be thus propt or maintained with Persecution, and such harsh Proceedings; and whilst men are seeking out and contriving snares one after another, and many times will not stick to their own Law, when they have made it, (if they think it not severe enough) but if they can finde any more severe to afflict their fellow-Creatures by, for their Conscience, they'l make use of that: This shews want of Tenderness, Love or Pity to the Creation of God, and manifests exceeding hardness of heart, which the Righteous God sees and takes notice of.

And what Decrees soever be made against us, whilst Reason

is pretended as the ground of all Laws, (and which there is an appearance of them of, in the Preambles of Laws, as shewing the cause of them) there is none in Reason or Equity that can reach us: and if one be devised after another against us, the Lord will clear us, and none ought in Equity or Reason to be inflicted upon us, we being innocent in our Behaviour, and peaceable in our Deportment, which answereth our Principle; so that whilst we do suffer, it is clearly for Conscience-sake, and for serving and worshipping the Living God, though we and our Cause be misrepresented by our Persecutors, whose Spirits and Proceedings are against God, his Truth and Worship, by their persecuting tender Consciences; though they would not be seen to persecute upon that account, but as being Seditious or Rebellious, (when no such thing can be proved against us) which is worse than the Heathen, or King *Darius* his *Presidents, Princes and Counsellours, that sought occasion against* Daniel: *For when they could find no occasion against him concerning the Kingdom*, (or Civil matters) *but he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him; then they took occasion against him for praying to God, to have a Decree made against him*; and so did not set a false gloss upon their proceedings, to render him criminal or obnoxious to the Government, but cleared him from that, but in their way dealt plainly, *Dan.* 6. saying, *We shall not find any occasion against this* Daniel, *except we find it against him concerning the Law of his God*, which Law he chused to obey and to suffer for, rather then any contrary Decree of man, as we have chosen, who suffer for obeying the Law of God; and none other occasion have our Persecutors against us, what ever falsly and unrighteously be pretended against us. And whereas some have alleaged that Scripture, *Ezra.* 7. 26. where *Artaxerxes* King of *Persia* said unto *Ezra*, *Whosoever will not do the Law of thy God, and the Law of the King, let Judgement be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto Death, or to Banishment, or to Confiscation of Goods, or to Imprisonment*, &c. This makes nothing for them that persecute, Imprison, or go about to banish, or destroy innocent persons for obeying the Law of God in Spiritual Matters; for here he prefers the Law of God, and takes it and the Law

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of the [illegible] together, (as supposing that the Law of the King was not to contradict the Law of God) and the executing of judgement (though the Kings Law might relate to civil things) was not to contradict the Law of God, for the King did refer it to such Judges as knew the Law of God, *vers.* 25. and that they might teach them; so as he was more ingenuous and moderate then those that will not suffer our Case (when upon our Tryal) to be examined or disputed, whether it be according to the Law of God and Christ, or not, which we are willing to be tryed by.

Now, O *England*, and thy Rulers, consider these things, and what you are a doing; and consider your sad estate and condition, whiles endeavours are used amongst you to root out the Righteous out of the Nation, and to make them Transgressors, when nothing of the breach of any just and civil Law, either of God or man can be proven against them; for these things God will assuredly visit, who hath a people among those you persecute that are dear unto him, who can neither comply with mens wills or wayes, contrary to his Light or Law in them, nor be leavened with that Spirit of envy and prophaness which is broken forth, to the dishonour of God and his Name; and if God had not destroyed *Sodom*, had there been ten righteous persons in it, what will become of you, if you go on to root out and banish or destroy such as fear God, and live righteously and soberly amongst men, against whom you have no occasion, but concerning the Law of God, and his Worship? Therefore repent, repent, and fear and dread the Living God! for a heavy day will come upon all *Sion*'s Oppressors, and all Workers of Iniquity, who, *because that judgement is not speedily executed upon them, their hearts are hardened, and set in them to do wickedly.*

From a tryed Servant of the Lord, in suffering with his Seed, for his Name and Worship.

G. W.